# High School Reform History

- 1892 Committee of Ten
- 1918 Commission on the reorganization of Secondary Education
- 1928 Seven Cardinal Principles
- 1930 Great Depression
- 1945 Life Adjustment Movement
- 1960 Coleman Study, Conant Study
- 1983 Nation at Risk
- 2002 No Child Left Behind

### Committee of Ten--1892

- 6% of US students attending H.S. in 1892
- Focused on standardization of US education with assurance of supplying an adequate number of "college-ready" students
- Recommended 12 years of study, 8 elementary, 4 secondary
- Curricula: English, mathematics, history/civics, science (biology, chemistry & physics)
- Charles Elliot: "Every subject which is taught at all in a secondary school should be taught in the same way and to the same extent to every pupil so long as he pursues it, no matter what the probable destination of the pupil may be, or at what point his education is to cease."
- Percentages of students attending H.S. rose from 6% to 51% by 1930
- Stanley Hall (psychologist): "Most high school students were part of a "great army of incapables...who should be in schools for the dullards or subnormal children."

# Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education -- 1918

- Two assumptions:
  - Current students were less intelligent than previous generations
  - Current students lacked intellectual ability, aspirations, and financial means to attend college; it was counterproductive to require a college-prep curriculum of them
- Called for "expanded and differentiated HS programs according to student interest, abilities, and needs."

#### Cardinal Principles Team 1928

"Changes in American life call for extensive modifications in secondary education"

- The role of secondary education is to achieve these seven objectives:
  - 1. Health (instruction and activities)
  - 2. Command of fundamental processes (reading, writing, arithmetic, oral expression)
  - 3. Worthy home membership ("fundamental social institution")
  - 4. Vocation (vocational training)
  - 5. Civic education (international relations)
  - 6. Worthy use of leisure (worthy recreation skills)
  - 7. Ethical character (personal responsibility, service, democracy)
- Secondary schools to be grades 7-12 (junior high and senior high)
- "Desirability of extending secondary education . . . to include the first two years of work . . . offered in colleges."

## **Great Depression--1929**

- Collapse of national economy with large numbers of unemployed led to pressure to "keep youth out of the job market."
- By 1940, 73% of youth in school.
- L.A. Williams, UC Berkley: Most high school students were "incapable of learning so-called liberal subjects." Pressure to require such rigor would lead to drop-outs and increased competition for scarce jobs.
- Academic course taking dropped from 67% to 62%.
- Health and PE increased from 4.9% to 11.5%.

# Life Adjustment Movement--1945

- Growth in non-academic courses increases, from 33% in 1928 to 43% by 1961.
- In 1910, <u>each</u> academic course enrolled a greater percentage of students than <u>all</u> non-academic courses combined.
- By 1982, more than 39% of courses were nonacademic.
- Studies on "tracking" and social classes were noted.
- Watering down of curriculum was defended as means to "keeping students from dropping out."
- Math enrollments drop from 12.8% to 9.2% with growth in "remedial" math courses.

# James Coleman Study--1961

- In new adolescent society, peer groups supersede adult authority.
- Teen role models turn to athletic prowess, good looks, popular personalities.
- Media reinforces "cosmetic" role models.
- 1957 Sputnik sparks math/science interest, but actual enrollments in math & science fell.
- Comprehensive high school model defended.

# James Conant Study--1959

- American schools were "sound," and "differentiated" curriculum was productive.
- Access to college by under-represented student populations (poverty & race) continues to be low.
- Little change in academic course taking between 1961-1973.
- Growth of one semester courses—"Rock Poetry"
- Math credit possible through "consumer math," "refresher math," "shop math" courses.
- Course taking guidance shifts away from counselor and educators to parents and student choice—"Do your own thing."
- Goal of education is a diploma, regardless of courses taken, not measures of actual student learning.

#### A Nation at Risk—1983

- Criticized the "cafeteria" curriculum
- Resulted in 45 states' increasing graduation requirements, math and science
- Increased graduation requirements did not change number of days of schooling nor hours in school day, but it did increase number of courses from 6 per semester to as many as 8, with less actual time given to instruction in courses.
- English course taking increased from 31.5% in 1982 to 74.6% in 1994. Similar increased taking among Hispanic and African Americans.
- Despite increased course taking, no gains in overall math scores, 1978-2004 on NAEP.
- "High schools have been 'selling students short' for decades, offering too many options and too many watered-down courses. They have sustained a culture of low-expectations on both sides of the teacher's desk."

## No Child Left Behind-- 2002

- Increased pressure on bringing <u>all</u> students to 100% mastery standards.
- Insistence on use of disaggregated student data showing minorities and poverty inequities.
- Insistence on "highly qualified instructors."
- Curriculum narrowing with states choosing to focus more time on basics and dropping of electives.
- Major pushback from states and result in states moving to Common Core standards.

## Retention and Completion Challenges

- Proponents of differentiated curriculum seek to protect their subject areas.
- School year and school day remain essentially unchanged, with actual time in courses lessened.
- Question on who is in charge of curriculum decisions—federal, states, local
- Federal and state advocacy for increased enrollments after high school graduation.
- National recession and reductions in funding to colleges and universities and increased tuitions.
- Criticism of college and universities offering "remedial courses."
- Finger pointing at high schools for failing to adequately prepare students for college/university studies.
- 100 years of history reflects our preference for "short-term" band-aid solutions.
- Any predictions, anyone??